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RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL  
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RUEHRG/AMCONSUL RECIFE  
RUEHRI/AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO  
RUEHSO/AMCONSUL SAO PAULO  
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA

UNCLAS BOGOTA 000398

SIPDIS  
STATE FOR CA/EX, CA/VO, CA/FPP AND WHA/AND

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [CVIS](#) [SMIG](#) [KFRD](#) [CO](#)

SUBJECT: Disabled Colombians Used as Cover for Visa Fraud

¶1. SUMMARY: AmEmb Bogota's consular Fraud Prevention Unit (FPU) recently completed an investigation into a fraud scheme involving unknowing disabled applicants traveling for medical appointments. The fraud dates back to 2003 and appears to have involved at least 117 applicants. END SUMMARY.

¶2. The fraud was orchestrated by an individual who claimed to represent several non-profit organizations that help people with disabilities and drug problems. The disabled applicants applied for visas to travel to the US for medical appointments or to be fitted for prosthetics. Invariably they applied together with a supposed employee of the non-profit who would be accompanying them to their appointments. In reality, the accompanying applicants were intending immigrants. In most cases the disabled individual was unaware of the fraud.

¶3. As part of the cover, the applicants always presented a letter from an organization called Volunteers of the World and bearing the logo of the United Nations Volunteers (UNVs). Case notes from refused cases found during the subsequent investigation often referenced these letters as seeming odd given the mission of the UNVs. Consular officers who denied the visas often pointed to the weak ties of the accompanying individuals.

¶4. FPU conducted its investigation using text searches in the Consular Consolidated Database (CCD), interviews with applicants, and site visits to the various addresses at which the non-profit organizations were listed. To close the investigation, FPU discovered an applicant pretending to be deaf/mute, attending his interview with his "interpreter." The interpreter turned out to be the visa facilitator and FPU interviewed him. When confronted, he admitted that he created the non-profits several years ago for the purpose of committing visa fraud. He told FPU that the companion is usually a person who wants to go the US to work or visit family members, but agrees to accompany a disabled person to their medical appointments. He admitted to charging the intending immigrants between \$1,000- \$2,000, which he claimed financed the trips and treatment of the disabled person, and left him with a profit. The FPU is only aware of the one case in which he attempted to facilitate a visa for an individual posing as disabled.

¶5. In all, some 117 individuals have applied through the scheme since 2003. Twenty-three visas were issued, of which at least six are confirmed overstay.

¶6. Immediately following the completion of FPU's investigation and revocation of visas that were obtained by fraud, an individual succeeded in boarding a plane to New York. Upon arrival, the Diplomatic Security (DS) New York Field Office informed the Assistant Regional Security Officer - Investigator (ARSO-I) that the individual was arrested and charged with visa fraud at the John F. Kennedy Airport. FPU and the ARSO-I has referred the entire investigation to DS and Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE) for possible action against the six individuals who remain in the United States.

¶7. Though the FPU expects that the scheme has ended, due to catching the facilitator in the act, the case pattern has been presented to adjudicating consular officers for their knowledge as they continue to adjudicate visas.  
BROWNFIELD